

Policy: ITP Events and Coronavirus

What: Operational policy in relation to the outbreak of Covid-19 novel coronavirus

Scope: All events, training, presentations and gatherings offered by ITP nationwide

When: With immediate effect. Expires 31 May 2020 unless renewed. Reviewed regularly

Background

Given the global impact and uncertainty regarding Covid-19 (novel coronavirus), the ITP leadership team have been considering different areas of impact within ITP and planning for any operational disruption that may result from a significant spread within New Zealand.

One major area of concern is in relation to events. As well as taking all reasonable steps to ensure the virus isn't spread through our community as a result of an ITP event, we must also be seen to be taking it seriously and responding appropriately while also not overreacting. Thus, this policy is intended to be a balanced response and is based on, and extends, advice from the Ministry of Health and other experts.

Scope

This policy impacts all ITP events nationwide (whether operated by the ITP Operations Team, local branch committees or others) and includes events, training, talks, informal events and others.

Any event that is associated with ITP and uses the ITP branding or name must also comply with this policy. For example, if we are partnering with a third party to support a third-party event, we must ensure these precautions are being taken at the event and if not, withdraw our branding.

The policy takes immediate effect and will expire on 31 May 2020 unless extended. It will also be reviewed regularly as new information comes to light and may be amended at any time.

5 key policies in brief

The 5 core policies (outlined in more detail in this document) are:

1. ITP events with an *expected* attendance over 100 are to be postponed or cancelled
2. We must ask attendees who meet specified risk categories (recent travel to a country of concern, symptoms consistent with Covid-19, or recent exposure to someone meeting these criteria) not to attend our events.
3. Hand sanitiser is to be present at the entrance and available to all attendees at all events.
4. Signage (provided by ITP) is to be present at all entrances to our events.
5. We must carefully track attendance at our events to assist in the case of an outbreak.

Coronavirus impact on conferences and events

Covid-19 is having a significant impact on the global economy and the worst is likely still to come. It is also directly impacting a number of industries such as travel, tourism and events.

In terms of the conference and event industry, the virus is having a drastic impact internationally, with many conferences and other events this year being cancelled. This is likely to continue for some time and is a result of local authorities cancelling events, public concern resulting in people choosing to stay at home, and speakers and others refusing to travel.

While the initial wave through China is clearly dissipating, the infection rate in other countries is increasing markedly with around 110,000 detected infections so far and over 3,800 deaths (as of 9th March 2020). It's likely the number of undetected cases is significantly higher than this, and sadly, deaths will continue to climb.

Many companies and governments have banned both non-essential travel and attendance at large events such as sports events and conferences. While domestically the impact hasn't been as large within New Zealand as yet, it's likely this will change in the coming months as the number of cases here continues to increase, as is currently happening in many other parts of the world.

Many tech conferences have been cancelled worldwide, even in places where there isn't considered to be a major outbreak. In New Zealand and regionally, while the Ministry of Health has said that larger gatherings and conferences don't need to be cancelled, a number have already been cancelled such as the Ingram Micro Showcase, the AWS Conference, plus Salesforce's main conference, Google Cloud Next, and a range of others in Australia. Many smaller meetups and other events have also been cancelled.

ITx 2020 has been postponed

ITx 2020 will be pushed back until mid-2021. This decision was not taken lightly and has now been made by the ITP National Board on the recommendation of the leadership team.

While it is likely that most of the impact of Covid-19 will be dissipated by late this year (when the conference was intended to occur), the period between now and July/August is essential to secure sponsors, delegate attendance intentions and international and local speakers. This corresponds with a period of clear international concern and restriction, as well as winter in New Zealand – which is likely to bring both increased Coronavirus cases here, plus anxiety in relation to “normal” flu season.

Therefore, the only prudent decision from both a public safety and financial perspective is to push back ITx 2020 until next year. It was important that this decision was taken now to both avoid potential financial and reputational damage and to provide certainty to our members.

Policy 1: Large (>100 attendee) events

1. ITP events with an expected attendance of over 100 are to be put on hold until further notice.

While the Ministry of Health advice is currently that larger events don't need to be cancelled, we are taking this decision to protect our community and be seen to be doing so. As a professional body, it is important that we set an example by making prudent and responsible decisions around our members' health and safety, even where inconvenient for us.

There is also a financial risk around larger events at this stage, given uncertainty around attendance.

Policy 1 only applies to events that are clearly organised by, or run in partnership with, ITP. We do not need to withdraw support for larger third-party events unless we are seen to be a primary organiser.

An exemption from Policy 1 may be given by the ITP Executive where there is an essential need to run the event and additional appropriate risk mitigation steps are being planned.

Policy 2: Attendees meeting certain risk profiles

- 1. Attendees who meet the following criteria will be asked not to attend ITP events:
 - a. Having returned from a "country of concern" within the last 14 days*
 - b. Have had any symptoms that are consistent with Covid-19 within the last 14 days*
 - c. Have been in contact with anyone who meets either of these two criteria in the last 14 days**
- 2. ITP must write to all registered attendees prior to all ITP events with this information, plus include it on event notices while this policy is in force. A webpage on the ITP website will have more info.*
- 3. ITP will only support third-party events with similar policies. "Support" means associate the ITP name or brand with the event, or provide any form of financial or other support.*

At this stage, we will not ask attendees at the door of our events if they meet these criteria – we will leave it to attendees to self-identify based on the information we provide them and signage (see below). This may change if the risk profile of Covid-19 in NZ changes.

Countries of Concern

The Ministry of Health maintains the [list of Countries of Concern](#), and this policy shall apply to both Category 1 and Category 2 countries.

Currently these are the following 8 countries:

- Mainland China
- Iran
- Italy
- Republic of Korea

- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Singapore
- Thailand

Symptoms that apply

The following are the primary symptoms that apply to this policy:

- Fever
- Coughing (especially a dry cough)
- Difficulty breathing

Policy 3: Hand sanitiser at all events

1. *ITP will provide alcohol-based hand sanitiser at the entrance and exit of all events*
2. *ITP will only support third-party events where hand sanitiser is available. "Support" means associate the ITP name or brand with the event, or provide any form of financial or other support.*

One of the key methods of spread for Covid-19 is transfer on surfaces. This is invariably transferred initially by coming into contact with commonly used surfaces by hand (such as handrails), then transferring from hand to mouth, nose or eyes.

Providing hand sanitiser and encouraging its use at the start and end of each event assists by reducing the likelihood of someone transferring the virus into our event (and thus spreading it) and transferring it out again if it does come in or if a surface is contaminated.

ITP staff and volunteers should be aware, however, that not everyone can use alcohol-based hand sanitiser. For example, those with an aldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH) deficiency and young children are two groups where hand sanitiser isn't recommended.

Therefore, the policy is that hand sanitiser is to be provided and recommended on entry and exit, however the use of it will not be mandatory or policed. We ensure it is available, however it is up to our attendees to choose whether or not to use it.

Sourcing hand sanitiser is problematic currently. The ITP operations team is sourcing hand sanitiser for all branches and will distribute this, with signage, once it is available. If you are running an event before this arrives you should take reasonable steps to ensure hand sanitiser is available, however you do not need to cancel an event because it hasn't arrived.

Once sanitiser has been distributed to all branches, its availability at events while this policy is in place is mandatory. Some venues are already providing hand sanitiser – it doesn't have to be ITP-supplied.

Policy 4: Signage at all events

- 1. A sign is to be placed at the entry and exit points of all events with a summary of Policy 2 and 3, plus a request to use hand sanitiser*
- 2. ITP will only support third-party events with appropriate similar signage. "Support" means associate the ITP name or brand with the event, or provide any form of financial or other support.*

Signs are currently being designed and will be distributed to all branches alongside hand sanitiser. These signs should be placed on a table or similar, with the hand sanitiser, at all main entrances and exits.

Third party events must provide signage with the same core points or we must withdraw support. They may optionally use our signage.

Policy 5: Tracking attendance carefully

- 1. The names and contact details of all attendees at ITP events must be recorded accurately.*

If an individual who attended an ITP event is subsequently tested positive for Coronavirus, we have to be in a position where we can immediately provide health officials with an accurate record of every person who was at that event.

Most attendees are registered through our registration system, however we need to identify who actually attended rather than just who registered.

Thus, the organisers of every ITP event must:

- Record those who were registered but didn't attend ("No-shows")
- Capture the name, email address and contact phone number for those who attended but didn't register

The list of non-registered attendees and no-shows should be sent through to events@itp.nz within 24 hours of the event. ITP operations staff will then update registration details for the event accordingly.

A printed template will be provided to make it easier to record these "on the fly".

We recommend using name-tags and ensuring everyone receives theirs on arrival:

- Anyone without a name tag hasn't pre-registered and can be issued with a written name tag, and their details recorded at the same time
- Any name tags left over are "no-shows"
- Ensure that the name tags are removed shortly after the event starts, to ensure people leaving don't add their tag to the pile of no-shows as they leave

Alternatively, have someone staffing the registration desk and mark names off the list as they arrive.

Another possible approach would be to block attendance for anyone who hasn't pre-registered, however we have opted not to take this approach at this time.

Cheat sheet: ITP events

A quick summary of who will do what for ITP-run events to conform to this policy is as follows:

The ITP Operations team will

1. Publicise this policy
2. Email registered attendees in advance with the policy (via our event system)
3. Provide hand sanitiser and signage to all branches

Those running an event will need to

1. Not plan events with likely > 100 attendees until further notice (or discuss with us)
2. Ensure the signage and hand sanitiser is available at the entrance to the event
3. Accurately record no-shows and non-registered attendees and send this in within 24 hours

Cheat sheet: Third-party events

ITP may only support events that take similar precautions. "Support" in this context means associate the ITP name or brand with the event, or provide any form of financial or other support.

Therefore any third-party asking us to support their events must confirm that they:

1. have a policy around attendance of "at risk" individuals, similar in scope to the ITP Policy 2
2. are proactively notifying attendees of this policy (eg via email), and include signage that states it
3. will provide hand sanitiser at entrances and exits and signage encouraging its use

Without these in place, ITP is not in a position to support these events.

Note that third-party events in this context are those that ITP explicitly supports, either via associating our name or branch, or via financial or other support. While we do recommend similar steps are taken by everyone, third-party events that are just on our events calendar are not in-scope for these policies.